

CHALLENGE



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TRANSIT STRIKERS FLEX THEIR POWER



garage and bringing revolutionary communist literature and ideas to many workers.

At today's rally, a PLP member and former president of Local 689 of the Amalgamated Transit Workers Union (ATU) called for all 8,000 Metro (D.C. transit) workers to prepare to strike in solidarity, to a rousing chant of "If we don't get it, shut it down!"

Two PLP members briefly blocked a scab bus at a traffic light to the delight of the assembled workers, declaring, as the song goes, "that there's vampire bats and sewer rats, there's pubic lice and crabs, but the lowest form of life on earth is the slimy [Metro] scab."

Break the bosses' laws

Union leaders have discouraged stopping scabs due to legal concerns, but the workers were happy to see us take the lead in this action. The workers were right in supporting our "illegal" action. The bosses control the politicians who pass laws to keep workers powerless. We must learn to break these bosses' laws as we organize a movement to get rid of the entire capitalist system. Next time we should get more workers to join us.

Metro transit workers (Local 689) are contractually barred from striking, but the Cinder Bed strike is legal (also ATU 689 members) because Metro contracted out the Cinder Bed garage to the Transdev Corporation. Transdev operates in five continents and 20 countries and is known for brutal attacks on the wages, benefits, and working conditions of public transit workers across the globe. "Bus operators, utility workers, and mechanics at the bus garage are fighting for a pay and benefits package comparable to that of workers employed by Metro who perform the same jobs" (The Washington Post, 11/13).

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FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA, NOVEMBER 16—Today Progressive Labor Party (PLP) members from Washington, D.C. and PLP transit workers from New York City joined hundreds of workers in support of the 23-day Cinder Bed Road strike of 130 transit workers. The decision to strike is a historic one, since the

last time workers went on strike was in 1978.

Along with our study group members we are continuing our participation in the path breaking strike of mainly immigrant workers against Transdev, a private transit company, by helping picketing at the Cinder Bed Road

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OUR FIGHT

- ☆Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.
- ☆The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today’s world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.
- ☆Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world’s workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.
- ☆While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim “communism is dead,” capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.
- ☆Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society’s benefits and burdens.
- ☆Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of “race.” Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.
- ☆Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.
- ☆Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.
- ☆Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion’s false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.
- ☆Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP’s criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a “following” around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual’s writing of an article.

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Editorial

Impeachment exposes bosses’ factions



@PLPchallenge



Challenge Desafio

Despite the smoke and mirrors over “corruption” in Ukraine, the Donald Trump impeachment proceedings expose the intense fight between two factions within the U.S. capitalist class. The battle between the main wing, Big Fascist liberal bosses and the Small Fascist, more domestically oriented bosses is based on something more fundamental than any “quid pro quo” in Kiev. It reflects a sharp difference over how to manage the U.S. bosses’ decline.

The U.S. rulers’ real conflict is over how to deal with the rise of the Chinese bosses as a global superpower and to preserve their vast investments in Middle East oil and around the world. Workers have no side in this fight. Both capitalist factions will give us fascism, though in different forms. For the international working class, the only choice is communist revolution—to eliminate inter-imperialist war and fascism by smashing capitalism for all time.

Ukraine and the death of the liberal world order

Trump’s impeachment was initiated by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other politicians controlled by the Big Fascists, the same group that established the liberal world order after World War II. These main wing bosses invested trillions of dollars and decades of effort into dismantling the old Soviet Union, the first workers’ state in the history of the world. Even after the USSR was dissolved in 1991, the U.S. rulers continued to drive a wedge between Ukraine and Russia. Toward that end, they backed anti-Soviet dissenters, corrupt politicians, and open Ukrainian fascists (Nation, 2/22).

By contrast, the domestic bosses’ isolationist playbook calls for ceding geopolitical ground to its other imperialist rival Russia. As the Daily Caller News Foundation, a Small Fascist media outlet, stated: “We need Ukraine like an alcoholic needs a drink... [The State Department has to stop] keeping our assumptions exactly where they were in the fall of 1977, when fighting the Soviet menace consumed a lion’s share of the federal budget” (RealClearPolitics.com, 11/15). However self-serving or uneven Trump may be, he is carrying out the Small Fascists’ Fortress America strategy.

Ukraine’s local bosses are adjusting accordingly. Billionaire oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky, who not long ago financed military attacks against eastern Ukraine’s Russian-speaking Donbas region, is now pursuing closer ties to Russia: “EU and NATO won’t take us, but Russia is ready to welcome us”(New York Times, 11/13). Further, Trump’s military withdrawal from Syria has surrendered a big piece of the Middle East to Russian and Iranian control. This is the real reason for Trump’s impending impeachment: his retreat from the U.S. empire.

A tale of two capitalist factions

Since the 1930s, the Big Fascists have dominated the U.S. capitalist class. Led originally by the Rockefeller family oil and financial monopoly, they have pulled the puppet strings of every U.S. president since Franklin Delano Roosevelt, with the exception of Trump. In 1945, by incinerating hundreds of thousands of workers with atom bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. the Big Fascists established themselves as the leading genocidal butchers of the new world order. Over the 75

years since, they have butchered our class in Greece, Turkey, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Congo, South Africa, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Syria, the Dominican Republic, Chile, and Mexico—and in dozens of other countries, including the U.S., all to preserve the profits they’ve stolen from our class.

For decades, the Small Fascists have rankled over being taxed to pay for wars to protect the Big Fascists’ multinational investments, which compete with their own domestic-centered businesses. They have consistently opposed U.S. military intervention in the Middle East as an unfair government subsidy to their imperialist competition, like Exxon Mobil.

This domestic faction is currently led by the ultra-rightwing Koch family and Koch Industries, the top supplier of capital equipment for the petroleum industry and the second-largest privately held company in the U.S. The Kochs have financed numerous gutter racist and fascist organizations around the world, including the Ku Klux Klan, the American Nazi Party, and assorted white nationalist militias.

The unholy Trump-Koch -fundamentalist alliance

The Koch family fortune got a huge boost with the ascendance of hydraulic fracturing (fracking) at domestic oil and gas wells, to the point where the U.S. is now a net energy exporter for the first time in many years. It also gave the Kochs ample funds to consolidate their control over the Republican Party. The Small Fascists replaced traditional Big Fascist Republicans with Tea Party members and other compliant politicians. In 2016, they saw their opportunity to seize control of the presidency. The Koch family alone budgeted \$889 million for the campaign.

Trump and the Small Fascists struck a deal. In exchange for choosing Koch protégé Michael Pence as his vice-presidential running mate, Trump received the Kochs’ backing, along with the support of big-money Christian fundamentalists. The ability of this unholy alliance to seize the White House reflects a longterm liberal decline, the result of more than 20 years of failed Middle East wars and the 2008 economic crisis. Though they’ve have had some differences over trade and immigration, Trump has mostly done what the Small Fascists want, especially in foreign policy, taxes, and regulation. For now, at least, he’s kept their support.

Oppose all fascists

It’s not hard to see that the Koch faction is clearly fascist. Open racists have been energized by the Trump presidency. Attacks by white nationalists are on the rise, from Texas and South Carolina to Syracuse, New York. This Nazi scum has penetrated the White House in the form of “senior policy adviser” Stephen Miller (Guardian, 11/16). Anti-racist workers everywhere are understandably appalled.

But many workers fail to see the equally fascist character of the liberal imperialist faction and the Democratic Party it controls. Behind Democratic presidents like Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, the Big Fascists have imposed mass racist imprisonment and intensified racist police terror. They have done—and will do—more to build fascism than the Kochs could dream of. That’s why Progressive Labor Party calls them the greater danger to our class.

To try to survive the deepening contradictions of capitalism, the liberal bosses will use fascism to crush the Kochs and their ilk. Trump’s impeachment marks their first big step in that direction. Then the Big Fascists will intensify their brutal exploitation of the working class, in preparation for leading the U.S. into World War III.

As communists, we must organize our fellow workers to act independently of the leadership of all fascists, Big or Small. We have a long road to travel—and a world to win!✊

Workers celebrate Bolshevik Revolution



CHICAGO, November 16 – A multi-racial, multi-generational crowd packed a local café tonight to celebrate the anniversary of the victorious Bolshevik Revolution. Our Progressive Labor Party (PLP) collective has been organizing this annual

event in recent years to mark the momentous occasion of communist triumph and workers' power.

We were all treated to an engaging anti-racist, anti-sexist program, along with good food, socializing and music. The capitalist bosses push their own rotten culture, including individualism, racism, sexism, and nationalism. Events like this are how we continue to build an egalitarian communist culture, winning our families and friends closer to building a mass fighting PLP that will lead the international working class to take state power once again.

Revolutionary education

To give an historical and political context, we started with a brief video that showed the timeline of events surrounding Russia during World War I. In the middle of a world war the communist Bolsheviks took advantage of the capitalist bosses' crisis and organized for armed revolution. When images of workers and soldiers taking over factories and storming the Winter Palace came on screen, many in the audience applauded.

A teacher comrade then reported about the recent Chicago teachers' strike. He commended the militancy, energy, and mass character of the struggle, while correctly pointing out the limits of the reform movement and the danger of trusting liberal politicians. If the working class is ever going to overcome the racist inequalities present in schools under capitalism, we're gonna need to organize for communist revolution!

With this in mind, those in the audience were asked to give ideas of what schools might be like, if we weren't limited by the bosses' racist budgets and their racist ideology. Each table was asked what they would like to see in communist schools.

The responses were both practical and creative. We need nurses, social workers, therapists, and counselors in all schools. One table called for having a community garden tended by students and educators where healthy food could be grown collectively and shared. Another table talked about how students would be actively involved in deciding the curriculum.

Union misleaders and capitalist politicians promise a lot of these things, but at the end of the day education for the capitalist bosses is about training students to be obedient workers without

questioning the system. A communist education would develop the talents of workers to their full potential. It would be based on science and the needs of the working class. Education would be a lifelong experience available to all without cost, and students and staff would have an active role in how schools are run.

Chant-making, Family Feud PLP-style

Next we organized a chant-making session. In the mass movement, repeating the same chants can be boring, so we thought we'd harness some of our working-class creativity!

A comrade provided some helpful pointers to get the ball rolling, and we watched a video of workers in South Africa fearlessly marching and chanting against the racist apartheid system. After their militant example, we were ready!

One clever call-and-response chant started with something negative like "Racist teachers?" and the audience would respond with "FLUNK YOU!" Another chant parodied DJ Khaled's "All I Do is Win" but made it about workers fighting back and winning. One chant was international, saying in Spanish "Arriba, abajo – ¡Trump/Lightfoot al carajo! (Up, down – Trump/Lori Lightfoot, go to hell!)

We ended our event with a bang, inviting two teams of workers and youth to play a few rounds of the game show Family Feud. But our categories were based on calling out liberal politicians for their attacks on the working class, or lessons that communists learned from the Bolshevik Revolution. The number one answer for this category was: Making a revolution CAN really happen!

Long live communist revolution

The talent, knowledge, creativity, and resilience of the international working class is truly limitless. We have so much to learn from past communist movements, and events like this remind us of our class's bright future and how we can and will make revolution again, wiping out capitalism forever.

Long live the Bolshevik Revolution! All power to the international working class!✊

APHA: no cure for sick capitalism



PHILADELPHIA, NOVEMBER 5 — Today, over 80 healthcare workers and local organizers from the NGO Puentes de Salud ("Bridges of Health") protested detention centers, deportations and borders at this year's meeting of the American Public Health Association (APHA). Progressive Labor Party members, who have been active in the American Public Health Association (APHA) for several decades, helped lead the march from the site of this year's convention in Philadelphia to an ICE office several blocks away. Marchers from the mass organizations held up signs such as "\$\$ crosses borders, why not people." Workers also led chants calling for "No Borders!" recognizing that borders only help the capitalists and divide

Health justice means internationalism, revolution

Highlights of the rally included:

- There were speakers from Doctors 4 Camp Closure (D4CC), People's Health Movement and Life Undocumented. We met new friends from Puentes de Salud two weeks earlier through contacts made at a D4CC rally. An undocumented immigrant from New York City with Life Undocumented spoke of his struggles with stress and PTSD even as he had become an anesthesiologist.
- A young immigrant from Mexico became tearful and angry as he explained that U.S. capitalism had driven people out of their countries, that Customs and Border agents singled out transgender immigrants in the camps for harassment and sexual assault,

and that now the vicious capitalists are attacking them here.

- A young medical student from the University of Pennsylvania led songs of resistance as we marched back to the convention center. A creative student joined PLP's "Troublemakers Coffee Hour" and made a sign: "I like my country like my whiskey –without ICE."
- Many signs from Health Impact Partners said "Immigrant Justice Is Health Justice". Members from Chicago's Radical Public Health group displayed their radical t-shirts proudly. 30 marchers signed up to be contacted in the future to strengthen the fight against racist deportations and ICE.

A PLP doctor attacked capitalism's continuing failure to provide health care, from her days 50 years ago organizing a free clinic in Durham, North Carolina, for Black and white workers, to her work today in a Maryland free clinic serving immigrants lacking decent health care from Latin American, Africa, and Asia.

She called on the marchers to build a revolutionary communist movement with multiracial unity to end this exploitative racist system of capitalism.

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Despicable union contract fails workers and students



NEW YORK CITY, NOVEMBER 19—

At a recent Delegate Assembly of the Professional Staff Congress (PSC), delegates were voting on whether to recommend the recent contract offer to the members. Not surprisingly, the contract presented before us was trash and drew the ire of a spirited group of 7K or Strike (7kos) members. The meeting was another attack and distraction brought to you by the sell-out union. Capitalism is only about profit for the bosses and misery for workers, no matter how much the liberal misleadership of the union and their politicians try to mask this.

The ongoing struggle around the contract has presented PL'ers in the fight with the perfect opportunity to raise our communist politics, and build student-worker solidarity in a time of rising fascism and racist attacks. Progressive Labor Party members, also part of the 7kos, participated in the forceful agitation against the union leadership to denounce their hypocrisy for force-feeding workers a contract that would only ensure the continuation of poverty wages.

On a positive note, through this struggle we've been able to expose the crisis of capitalism, and make CHALLENGE a regular staple on campus. Our goal is to continue to put forth the understanding that capitalism can never provide quality education or meet workers' needs, and to win workers to fight for communism.

Agitate

The union misleaders have been touting this contract as one of "equity" and "parity," hailing it as a "historic breakthrough." But the barrage of racist attacks on the working class by the CUNY administration, their CEO's and fake progressive leaders Governor Andrew Cuomo and Mayor Bill de Blasio show no signs of slowing. Many campuses are crumbling and students must contend with broken elevators, broken sinks and toilets, missing lights, classrooms that are unfit for learning, etc.

All throughout CUNY campuses students must endure wretchedly racist learning environments even as tuitions climb. This goes hand in hand with the racist teaching conditions that educators are battling against. Recently, in secret

bargaining sessions with CUNY, the union misleadership agreed to a contract that contains one racist attack after another. It offers measly two percent annual raises, which is below inflation, especially in New York where housing costs skyrocket every year. It locks part-time faculty, the most exploited and disproportionately Black and Latin constituency in the union, into poverty wages until the contract expires in 2022.

It abolishes yearly contractual raises for part-timers, but tellingly, not for full-time instructors, and increases workloads for part-time instructors. All this is stacked up mainly against Black and Latin faculty and students.

What's more, the racist nature of these attacks is clear as day when we hear that there is no money for better college campuses, but plenty of money (billions), for the four new jails the Mayor wants to build in our backyards (NY Times, 9/4).

Build a base

As we battle the three-front battle against the bosses racist attacks, the sell-out union leaders, and their liberal politicians, PL'ers on campus have been using it as an opportunity to connect the contract fight with the racist attacks against students at CUNY. On a number of campuses, we've been involved in campaigns to highlight the deteriorating physical conditions, and trying to link the working conditions of professors and the learning conditions of students. Some student leaders have attended a number of union meetings and spoke up about our need to unite.

The whole experience has been a learning process, and our students have been leading it, as the majority of them are also workers and bring with them this understanding to campus struggles. At the same time, we've been leading a wide-scale organizing effort to reach as many members as possible to convince them to vote against the contract. In these conversations, we point out that, unlike the union leadership, which is content to lobby in Albany or at the CUNY Board of Trustees, 7K or Strike has a very clear plan to move us to a more militant option: a strike.

We plan to take the lessons from teachers around the country, especially Chicago, who have built years-long campaigns to win support from parents and students. It is in these conversations that PL members are able to bring forward communist ideas most directly.

Class struggle is in session

With the contract up for a vote later this month PL'ers will continue to try to expand the limits of what's possible as well. We will continue to work in student organizations, set up strike committees with students and faculty, and continue to agitate for fighting.

Finally we will continue to raise workers consciousness around the understanding that we must continue to fight for better learning and teaching conditions wherever we are.

Ultimately the crisis of capitalism, and subpar learning conditions can only be solved when workers fight for a communist society: where education will be used for the transformation of society, and for the benefit of all. ☛

APHA: no cure for sick capitalism

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Another comrade from Philadelphia explained how his parents had immigrated from Europe under severe conditions and he appreciated the immigrants stepping up to speak here. He urged marchers to organize support for immigrants in their unions and on their jobs, much as we were doing at APHA.

Long term outlook key to victory

Several sections of the APHA endorsed the rally as a result of the 30 years of activities and struggle within this 13,000-strong organization by PLP members, including engagement in the International Health, Medical Care, Community Health Planning and Policy Development, and Socialist Caucus as well as in local chapters throughout the country.

We also built the rally by distributing 1,100 flyers calling for an end to deportations, detention and borders just before the opening APHA session on Sunday and at multiple sessions during the conference. We also used resolutions that APHA has previously passed supporting health for immigrants and no separation of families to encourage participation.

Such resolutions can be used to strengthen local struggles as well, like the one in Philadelphia to close the Berk detention center and turn it into a drug treatment center, and the fight to abolish borders. Comrades and many young health-worker allies have similarly used the resolution against racist police brutality passed after a 3-year struggle ("Law Enforcement Violence as a Public Health Issue") in local battles against brutal cops.

communist revolution

Abolishing borders and providing decent health care means destroying capitalism through revolution, not elections, and so we made the fight for communism front and center by distributing over 400 copies of our CHALLENGE Special Edition with the bold slogan, Revolution will not be on the ballot!

The revolutionary communist movement PLP is building is international. A powerful moment in our organizing included meeting a young public health researcher from Puerto Rico who recounted the details of the demonstrations numbering a million people against the failure of the Puerto Rican governor to serve the people after Hurricane Maria. While the corrupt governor was driven out of office, our new friend agreed that the working class failed to seize control of the government because revolutionary groups were too small and unprepared. Our job is to change that by helping her build the PLP in Puerto Rico to create the revolutionary leadership needed there – and around the globe. ☛

Transit strikers flex their power

Continued from page 1

Another similar Transdev site in Virginia, the Fairfax Connector, with 600 workers (organized in Local 1164 of the ATU) is set to go on strike as well on November 30.

But both strikes will be ineffective unless the main regional Metro union prepares to shut down the entire transit system in solidarity. Metro's contracting out is a scheme by the bosses to undercut the livelihood first of one group of workers and then all workers.

Fight racist divisions

Communist PL'ers in the union are struggling with their fellow workers to organize strike preparation and sharper action against the transit bosses. But even more importantly, we are showing that even militant class struggle is not enough because the bosses will use every trick in the book to divide workers by race, immigration status, and anything else they can figure out to keep all of us exploited and under their thumb.

Several workers that we've met on the picket line have agreed to receive CHALLENGE and get involved in revolutionary politics. Let's build the Progressive Labor Party so that we can free our class from capitalist, racist exploitation by smashing the capitalist state and building communism! ☛

Shut down Rikers and capitalism

NEW YORK CITY, NOVEMBER 20—The liberal NYC Council voted to close the Rikers Island prison complex, which has hounded mainly Black and Latin workers since 1935. Four new houses of horrors are expected to take its place. While capitalism unleashes its terror machine on Black and Latin workers, the communist movement looks to these oppressed workers as potential leaders for a just world, communism.

Prisons necessary for capitalism

Rikers is a massive complex of 10,000 beds. It currently holds around 7,000 daily and is now slated to close by 2026. As crime rates continue to fall, these liberal politicians still cling to the stick of the police and the courts to maintain their status quo. Rikers Island, one of the most racist, vile institutions, preys on and imprisons workers and is bad for all but the rulers.

Capitalism is guilty of murder

Under the liberal bastion of New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Kalief Browder, a young Black man was robbed of his youth when he was sent to rikers as a teenager and held for three years with no court date on suspicion of stealing a backpack. After spending a majority of that time in solitary confinement, he was released. Unable to cope with the trauma that capitalism inflicted on him, he committed suicide. This is just one documented experience that reflects the racist terrorization of Black and Latin youth under capitalism. Kalief Browder, the Exonerated 5, and the youth being harassed in recent years by the MTA police (see last issue of CHALLENGE) is why we fight to smash racism.

Under the system of capitalism, the police, jails, and courts exist to keep workers separated, scared, and docile. At an outrageous cost of both resources and suffering, these new prisons will displace workers only to lock them back up for the

sake of control.

Reform vs revolution

Workers are in motion against the new prisons, but without widespread working-class unity and a communist party, these efforts are doomed to fail. One protest was in Kew Gardens, Queens, where the Mayor plans to build a towering lockup for more than 1,400 inmates.

Capitalism disregards workers' safety; our labor can be lawfully commodified and sold. When the main wing of the U.S. bosses abolished slavery, they still kept a loophole: "...except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted..." In other words, prison labor. Every imprisoned worker is one less visible voice of dissent in the face of the bosses.

Working for a better world

Currently under this racist capitalist system, Black, Latin, and women workers are the most brutally exploited. Capitalist bosses dehumanize workers using this special oppression. They use their state apparatus, especially the police to terrorize workers, and protect their bosses, politicians. But the main reason the bosses use racist terror is to divide workers. The capitalist's biggest fear is multi-racial unity, and working class leadership. They shudder at the thought of workers breaking their shackles and taking power. Under communism, the working class will have the power to make and enforce all of the laws which society operates under. The working class will hold all decision-making power for its own call.

Only when the international working class holds power over their own lives can we expect to cultivate a world without racism, sexism, and all the lies that divide us. Under communism, crimes against the working class will be tackled by our class, for our class, with our class. ☸

Liberal venom comes in many flavors

Liberal misleaders are not all united behind this Rikers plan either: "In a sign perhaps of the challenges and opposition ahead, Councilman Carlos Menchaca, who represents parts of Brooklyn, said the legislation did not go far enough to address the reasons people end up in jail. 'This vote only enriches developers in the short term,' said Mr. Menchaca, who voted against the proposal. 'I do not trust this mayor, do you?'" (New York Times, 10/17).

Let's not be fooled by Menchaca, the City's first Mexican American to hold public office. This councilperson will play a role in ushering in gentrification and displacement of Latin and other workers. Industry City (it was once a manufacturing complex) has been redeveloped into a campus of companies. Despite his big talk about hurting residents, Menchaca is moving forward with Industry City's \$1 billion rezoning application, which will upzone "20 percent of the neighborhood's industrial waterfront property" (Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 11/7).

Menchaca, and other liberals like him, still serve capitalism. In fact, they serve the most dangerous wing of the U.S. ruling class: the Big Fascists. This wing has the U.S. global Empire, in mind when enacting policies and buying working-class votes. They are Big Fascists because they pose a more lethal threat to the working class than Trump and his brand of domestic Little Fascism. The Big Fascists will use the working class to discipline their national enemy. In doing so, they will also aim to steer the direction of working-class movements and funnel them into a war effort against China and Russia. This is the fascist apparatus that Menchaca and Co. are a part of.

Madagascar & Russia' growing imperialist footprint

Last month Russian President Vladimir Putin played host to more than 40 African heads of state. The summit solidified Russia's growing presence and stronghold over the region, filling a vacuum left by a retreating U.S.

Just as the U.S. withdrawal from Syria left an opening for Russian troops to assert their military foothold, this week taking control of a former U.S. airbase in northern Syria (CBS News, 11/17), openings in Africa have provided in-roads for Russia's growing global power.

As splits in the U.S. ruling class and the domestic wing's control of the White House continue to give way to Fortress America policies, Russia has set its sights on the African diamond trade, seizing opportunities to flex economically, militarily, and most recently through cyber warfare. This growing instability and modern-day arms race is a flashing alarm that world war is looming.

The path to political gain is paved in natural resources

Madagascar, seemingly insignificant to Russia, was a hot bed for Russian meddling during the island's 2018 presidential elections via time, support, money, and cyber influence.

Prior to the election a Russian company acquired a major stake in a government-run operation that mines chromium, a mineral valued for its use in stainless steel (New York Times, 11/19) explaining Russia's new-found interest in the region. Chromium, is a relatively rare yet coveted mineral, with South Africa claiming up to 70 percent of the earth's reserves (Engineer Live, 6/18). Madagascar has one of the world's largest reserves of ilmenite (titanium ore), as well as important reserves of coal, iron, cobalt, copper and nickel.

Mica, another profitable mineral found in Madagascar, is currently being mined by "children as young as four years old performing long hours of labor-intensive work in often dangerous conditions to collect a mineral whose price will be inflated nearly 500 times by the time it leaves Madagascar's shores" (NBC News, 11/19).



Imperialist gains over workers lives

Madagascar's working class faces unacceptable living conditions, unemployment, inadequate health care, poor access to food and economic resources, and severe power and water outages that have led to wide-spread riots and civil conflict since 1947 (Washington Post, 7/19).

The village of Andranondambo, known for its sapphire and mica deposits, is home to some of the most exploited members of our working class. NBC News calls the region "a 19th century slave trading center, where 75 percent of the population now lives on less than \$1.90 a day" (NBC News, 11/19).

As in all capitalist countries, the state continues to hold power yet no responsibility for the living conditions of its workers. The sham of elections continues to play a central role in maintaining control of profits never seen by workers and Russia, keen to benefit from Madagascar's rich physical land, saw an opportunity to gain political influence. Financially, Russia is still no match for

China and the U.S., who both have billions of economic investments in the continent (NYT, 11/19), moving Russia to rely on back-room tactics.

Russian influence in Madagascar began in early 2017, ahead of the 2018 elections. The operation was directed by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a Russian businessman and close adviser to Putin. Prigozhin was indicted in the U.S. last year, after being accused of information warfare and disrupting the 2016 election (NYT, 9/19).

Until Russia can surpass its global rivals financially, it has found a way to flex its power in the form of providing fringe political leaders an edge through meddling tactics, learned from the U.S.

A member of Prigozhin's team wrote in an email: "Russia should influence elections around the world, the same way the United States influences elections. Sooner or later Russia will return to global politics as a global player and the American establishment will just have to accept that" (NYT, 11/19).

Russia's collusion efforts in Madagascar, unlike their U.S. meddling, is not about upending a global rival, but rather about profit (NYT 11/19). After a number of shifts in candidate support, Russia retained their ultimate goal: control over the chromium operation in Madagascar. Russia now maintains "a staff of 30 in the country, including engineers and geologists and the contract gives them a 70 percent stake in the venture" (NYT 11/19).

Under capitalism world leaders and super powers will always have their eyes on profit. Global watchdogs, election meddlers -- whatever they may be called, are tools of state power to control means of production and rob workers of their power. The only solution for the international working class to control and use the world's resources sustainably for our own benefit is to destroy capitalism-imperialism by means of a mass PLP. Workers in Madagascar and everywhere: build the communist Red Army and organize for revolution!☸

LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

The Fascists, big and little

The little/big fascist description of the conflict within the ruling class has been helpful in talking politics on the job. I had some hesitation about using these labels at work at first but tried anyway. I thought people were nodding politely but not agreeing on a more profound level.

Then I found out my friends were using these phrases off the job to describe the impeachment situation to folks I've never met, sort of trying out the vocabulary in the same way I had with them. Even more a co-worker came up with examples to illustrate the point (some of which have appeared in CHALLENGE since then).

Amazon's Ring doorbell is communicating with police departments regardless of the president, a sign of Big Fascism

Those who expose little fascist Trump's dirty laundry walk freely in and out of Congress while those who exposed big fascist Obama (Assange, Snowden, Manning) are locked up or exiled

Real ID/national ID is a big fascist effort to better track all workers that is given cover by local ID/drivers' license movements and reforms for the undocumented. As horrific as today's fascist terror is for our undocumented class brothers and sisters it's small compared to the kind of big fascism Real ID lays the groundwork for.

Those applications of the line came from the working class, not the Party, from friends who are CHALLENGE readers who over a long period of time had been exposed to the idea that liberals are the main danger.

Co-workers who don't yet know the paper say things like "right now I'm totally down with trashing segregationist mass incarcerator Biden but if it's him vs. Trump you won't hear a peep more of criticism from me." That's an anti-racist friend who needs a true political alternative. The long process of developing another CHALLENGE readership begins anew.

★★★★★

What is winning?

A recent article in CHALLENGE (November 20, 2019) described a one day illegal strike by teachers in Massachusetts. Some minor gains were achieved and the union misleadership quickly sent everyone back to work. The article stated that "Progressive Labor Party members walked the picket lines, and, in a small victory, met an educator who may work with us." This, indeed, has the potential to be a victory, and not just a "small" one.

Later in that same article, the Chicago teacher strike is mentioned as "fighting for services for immigrant and homeless students ... is the way to win." And actually the Chicago strike did win some reforms. But capitalism is a relentless system constantly driving down wages, miseducating working class students, increasing homelessness and police terror, and increasingly heading toward world war between the major imperialist powers.

So fighting back like the Chicago striking teachers is "the way to win" only if we make a big effort to work with that "educator who may work with us." So as we fight the bosses, we must make the struggle for communist revolution primary in our discussions with our fellow workers. We must encourage them to become not just short term organizers for reform, but lifetime organizers for an anti-racist, anti-sexist world. That's communism. That means joining the Progressive Labor Party.

In Haiti there have been several months of strikes and uprisings with up to 700 protesters killed. Our comrades have correctly called for communist revolution. But just imagine how difficult it must be to organize discussions about communism and coming world war when you are fighting for your next meal or even for your life. Communist ideas will not come directly from mass struggle, no matter how militant. We must meet, discuss and analyze "in the trenches" as the Chinese communists did during their revolutionary struggle. When the working class is armed with communist ideas and organized in their communist party (PLP), we are not only winning, but unbeatable.

The recent General Motors strike is another example of the relentless nature of capitalist exploitation. Why did the workers strike? Because Barack

Obama was elected president as a great hope for the working class, especially the Black working class. But one of the first things he did was bailout General Motors from going bankrupt, while screwing the workers with a lower wage tier, lower benefits and closing factories. So they just went on strike, won a few crumbs, mostly lost, and in a few years will have to strike again.

Let's make communist revolution primary in all our reform battles. When we write for CHALLENGE let's explain how we are making revolution primary. We can't talk to everyone, so let's distribute more CHALLENGES, especially to our fellow workers. The imperialist bosses of the world are preparing for world war. We must prepare our class, the working class, to turn the next imperialist war into a class war for worker's power, communism! Join us.

★★★★★

Learn from the wisdom of GM strikers

When PLP comrades went with their unions to support striking United Auto Workers (UAW) workers at a General Motors warehouse in Pennsylvania, we learned from the masses. In the Chinese revolution, communists described a method called "from the masses, to the masses." It was a way of harnessing the collective knowledge of workers, peasant farmers, and intellectuals to the task of making revolution.

Revolutionary ideas are drawn from the practice and thinking of workers, "from the masses," then sharpened by the Party and returned "to the masses." The workers with the Party then accept or reject, criticize, adapt, and enrich the ideas as they test them in practice, in a spiral to higher and higher levels of revolutionary movement. The workers make the Party, and then the Party serves the working class as their revolutionary school, toolbox, and weapon.

The strikers talked with us for two hours. It all came together in a kind of forum with the strikers on center stage. We heard from a father and his son who would never match his dad's wages because of a tiered wage set-up. In response to a question of a PL'er, the son said that workers could easily run the plant without any bosses.

A PL'er said this increase in the rate of exploitation from father to son was an example of how bosses try to drive wages down to the absolute minimum. The strikers were leading a picket-line seminar on the core of capitalist exploitation of labor.

One veteran worker criticized the UAW leadership, though not in the public forum, for having lost its clout. He had worked in five GM plants. He said union officers got too far from the life of the workers, earned too much more than the workers, and formed a clique among themselves: "They appoint one another." His insights spoke to the problems of union leaders.

On the bus ride back, we were thinking hard about the wisdom of these workers. Thank you to the strikers who are holding the line and the other workers who came to support them! Workers know they fight for more than themselves. If we learn to use "from the masses, to the masses" and build a base in the working class, communist revolution has a future

★★★★★

Organize for a home in California

Some comrades and friends in Los Angeles had a potluck and discussion of the film The Last Black Man in San Francisco. The main characters, Jimmy and Montgomery, are on an epic journey to reclaim Jimmy's childhood home in gentrified San Francisco. The movie was all about Jimmy, promoting capitalist individualism. There is no analysis or movement against racist homelessness or the profiteering real estate industry. And certainly nothing is mentioned about communism, where everyone would have a decent place to live.

The film brought up issues that everyone in the room has dealt with or is dealing with. What does it mean to have a home? What is the effect of gentrification on neighborhoods and the workers who grew up there? Where do workers go when they are pushed out? What is the cause of gentrification and how can it be stopped?

Gentrification is erasing the history of working class neighborhoods, erasing their history of fight back and class struggle. The housing bosses use rac-

ism to divide the older neighbors from the newer ones when the real cause is capitalism and its drive for profit.

The crisis of homelessness in our state of California and how rent and home prices keep rising even when wages don't. How paying a mortgage is not that different from paying rent in a time when getting seriously ill could mean missing payments and losing your home to the bank.

We need to organize our co-workers, neighbors, and ourselves to fight these attacks on our working-class sisters and brothers. We need a long-term outlook that includes building a revolutionary communist movement that has a vision of living and working collectively for the good of the entire working class. As we fight for even small victories, they can be taken back, but once the working class seizes power a better world will be born.

On the surface this is a very apolitical movie, with no politicians mentioned. But the politics of individualism come through loud and clear. It isn't about reintegrating a historically black neighborhood; it is about just one man and one house. Individuals like Jimmy can be part of a larger housing movement. We want to fight for all workers to have a home, that's why we fight for communism.

★★★★★

**CAPITALISM
BREEDS SEXISM
RACISM
& IMPERIALISM!**



**FIGHT
FOR A COMMUNIST
WORLD**

**BUILD THE INTERNATIONAL
PLP!
PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY**

The Bolshevik Revolution

Continued from page 8

and support of Soviet workers, unmatched by any country, before or since. Soviet soldiers and workers fought for Stalingrad block-by-block, house-by-house and room-by-room to halt the “unbeatable” Nazi invaders. Workers in arms factories produced weapons 24 hours a day for the Red Army, working 12-hour shifts. When Nazi troops captured factories, heroic Soviet workers and soldiers would re-take them.

The entire German Sixth Army and 24 of Hitler’s generals were surrounded and killed or captured in the battle of Stalingrad. Never again would the Nazis mount a successful offensive against the Red Army. Stalingrad was truly the turning point of the Second World War. Not until the Nazis were on the run following their defeats at Stalingrad and in the Battle of the Kursk — the biggest armored battle in world history, involving millions of soldiers and 6,000 tanks — did the U.S.-U.K. forces invade Western Europe. It was the communist-led Soviet Union that smashed the Nazis, the largest and most powerful army ever mounted by a capitalist power.

All this was accomplished under the leadership of Josef Stalin. No wonder he is reviled to this day by world capitalism.

Lessons to be learned

Unfortunately, the Bolsheviks suffered from many political weaknesses, which led to the re-

turn of capitalism to the USSR. From the beginning they believed that to achieve communism, first socialism had to be established, a belief Karl Marx had advanced. We have learned from that experience that socialism retained capitalism’s wage system and therefore failed to wipe out many aspects of the profit system. Socialism put forward material incentives to the working class rather than political ones as the way to win workers to communism. We must win masses of workers to abolish capitalism’s wage system and its division of labor and fight directly for communism.

Today, no country is led by communists, but this is a temporary historical setback. While this long and volatile era of widening imperialist wars and fascist attacks on the working class is upon us, every dark night has its end.

PLP is a product of both the old International Communist Movement and the struggle against its revisionism. Pseudo-leftist groups have not learned history’s lessons and continue to fight for nationalist “sharing of power” with capitalists, a

la Venezuela’s Chavez, not for the working-class seizure of power and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Our movement is daily fighting to learn from the Soviet Union’s great battles and achievements as well as its deadly errors that led to its collapse, mainly that reformism, racism, nationalism and all forms of concessions to capitalism only lead workers to defeat. Give the ruling class an inch and they’ll grab a mile.

We honor the bold fight by the workers of the Bolshevik Revolution against capitalism and for a working-class communist world. Today, we must organize workers, students and soldiers to build a mass, worldwide, working class Party that will turn this era of imperialist wars into a new, international communist revolution.J



RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

Below are excerpts from the capitalist press that may be of use for our readers

NYT= New York Times

GW= Guardian Weekly

Big Tobacco making million\$ from child slavery

GW, 11/8 — Life for the child of a tenant farmer who works the tobacco fields of Malawi is unimaginably arduous. Up at 4:00 a.m. for several hours of labour with no breakfast, cutting into the earth with a heavy hoe....The first and only meal of the day, maize porridge, is eaten when they get home, before more digging. Sleep is on the bare earth under a straw roof. Now British-American Tobacco is facing...legal action on behalf of hundreds of these children and their families.... The company is getting wealthier while the children and their parents are trapped in poverty....

...Most children are deprived of an education, because [they can’t]...afford the small fees, exercise books and uniforms required.

The World Health Organization agrees. “tobacco growing, manufacture and distribution is incompatible with the well-being of a child....” In the case of tobacco, children have a particularly heavy burden to carry.

‘...Such practices hinder their ability to access education and develop in dignity, but they also expose them to...hazardous substances, such as pesticides...and nicotine.’

...Inside the straw hut is...a straw roof that will not even...keep out the torrential rains when they come....

...The monthly 50kg bag of maize...is more than half empty with more than two weeks to go. That is all they have to eat — maize porridge, called *nisma*, cooked once in the middle of the day with leftovers for supper....

[An] eldest boy, Chisomo, was sick....[and] walked to the health center, leaving at 4:00 a.m. and arriving at 6:45 a.m. Chisomo was vomiting...

[was] given an antibiotic and a painkiller...[and then] walked home....

Augustine, the deputy head of the local primary school [said]. “Most of the farmers are not sending their children to school.” Most of them are tired and hungry....”

Suzeo, a contract farmer....gestures to some ragged children nearby: “The children of the tenants. They are poor. They cannot assist their children. It is slavery.”

Racist attacks on the rise

NYT, 11/13 — ...Personal attacks motivated by bias or prejudice reached a 16-year high in 2018... with a significant upswing in violence against Latinos....

...Physical assaults against people were up, accounting for 61 percent of the 7,120 incidents classified as hate crimes....

...Still many cities and some entire states failed to collect or report the data last year, limiting the conclusions that can be drawn from the FBI report....

...The Council on American-Islamic Relations...recorded 1,664 hate crimes against Muslims in 2018....Daily acts of...discrimination in schools, workplaces and in public are not included in the FBI’s analysis....

...Hate-crimes reports so far this year, in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago...appear to be headed for decade highs....

The surge of attacks on the Jewish community, in large cities like New York and smaller cities like Pittsburgh...really has no precedent,” said...the Anti-Defamation League....

WW2 vet who fought fascists still waits to wipe out racist dishonorable discharge

NYT, 11/13 — Needham Mayes....had been a paratrooper in the Army, among the first black soldiers at Fort Bragg, N.C....He had an exemplary record for more than two years. It all ended in a bar fight in 1955.

Mr. Mayes was dismissed from the Army with

a dishonorable discharge. The punishment was disproportionately harsh and one in which race... played a part....

He moved to Brooklyn [NY] where he started over with a degree in social work and therapy, a leader in the borough’s poorest communities. But as he grew old, and his body weakened, he... sought to have his discharge upgraded to honorable status.

His condition worsened....Veterans Day found him quiet and still, unable to speak....

He died on Veterans Day....

He was 21 and stationed at Fort Bragg, where, on July 30, 1955, he walked into a bar on the base to meet a friend.

...The bar was reserved for officers and Mr. Mayes was only a private....A sergeant...rose from a table to confront the lower-ranking man.

The two began fighting....

...In 1956, he was dismissed from the service with a dishonorable discharge....

“I struggled with depression...and the shame of my dishonorable discharge,” he wrote.

He eventually pulled himself up...and going on to earn a master’s degree.

“I found stability...and dedicated my life to helping others....”

...His was one of 260,000 so-called bad-paper discharges....handed down to black service members in disproportionate numbers....

Around 2014, with his health beginning to fail,...he sought to petition the military to reconsider his discharge....to make him eligible to receive benefits...including health care....

The request was denied....He lost his hearing...and stopped eating....[A] new appeal was a success. Sixty-three years after leaving the Army, Mr. Mayes’s discharge was upgraded...to honorable....

...He pleaded...in 2017 “To be buried...with my comrades-in-arms.”

Bolshevik Revolution

WORKERS TOOK POWER; WE WILL AGAIN

One hundred and two years ago, November 7, 1917, marked the beginning of the single most important event of the 20th century, the Bolshevik revolution, which directly inspired the Chinese revolution and anti-imperialist struggles around the world from Vietnam to Africa to Latin America.

Russia's working class, headed by the revolutionary communists of the Bolshevik Party and its leader, Vladimir Lenin, freed one-sixth of the world's surface from capitalism. They proved once and for all that it was possible to strive for a world without exploitation, where those who produce all value, the working class, can enjoy the fruits of their labor and not have it stolen by a few parasitical capitalists and their lackeys.

The Bolshevik revolution was the first serious attempt by workers and peasants to seize, hold and consolidate state power. Even though capitalism has returned to the former Soviet Union, workers will not forget that the Soviet working class defeated capitalism in 1917; smashed the imperialist armies of 17 countries (including Japan, the U.S., Britain, France, among others) which invaded Russia in 1918 to try to crush the revolution; freed the masses, especially women, from the yoke of capitalist, feudal and religious oppression; and then in 1945 defeated the mightiest and most barbaric army the capitalists had ever organized: the Nazi Wehrmacht.

The revolution frightened the world's bosses, who immediately sent armies from 17 countries to try — in Churchill's words — to “strangle it in the cradle.” From 1918 to 1923, millions of workers led by the Red Army defeated the imperialists' counter-revolution. Nearly five million died in that battle, many of whom were the most committed workers the revolution had produced. Lenin himself died because of injuries inflicted by a hired killer.

The masses showed great courage and determination to defend and build their revolution, under the leadership of their revolutionary party. They proved that the revolutionary violence on the part of the working class and peasantry were vital to the seizure of state power.

Achievements of the revolution

The Bolshevik Revolution brought Russia to heights of productive development that capitalism, given a similar time period and circumstances, could never have dreamed of. Bringing the working class to power, the Revolution coordinated their social-economic efforts for the production and exchange of the necessities, the comforts and even some luxuries of life, making them available to all. The Soviet system of production was for use, not for profit. This can only be accomplished by abolishing capitalist profits and the private ownership of property, with its exploitation, poverty, unemployment, racism, fascism and imperialist wars.

In the 1930s, when the entire capitalist world sank into depression, and tens of millions worldwide were left jobless and starving (much like today), the Soviet Union was forging ahead building a new society without unemployment and hunger. They created some measure of a decent life for workers in an incredibly short time,



transforming a 90 percent illiteracy rate into one in which nearly everyone was literate.

Around 1938, without any official declaration, the USSR had achieved the era of free bread. One could enter a cafeteria, order little or nothing, and receive all the bread one wanted. You needed, you received — at least to that extent. Even during a drive for heavy industry, living standards rose strikingly when the rest of the world was mired in the Great Depression.

The Soviet Union not only freed workers but also fought against racism and sexism. The battle against racism was particularly significant. As pro-communist Paul Robeson said about his trips to the Soviet Union, he “felt like a human being for the first time since I grew up. Here I am not a Negro but a human being. Before I came I could hardly believe that such a thing could be.... Here, for the first time in my life, I walk in full human dignity.”

Heroic fight against the Nazis

In 1941, the bosses again tried to destroy the revolution. Hitler, using all of Europe's resources and the largest military machine ever assembled, invaded the Soviet Union with four million troops. They discovered the Soviets were no pushover as occurred in Western Europe. Hitler's prediction — endorsed by western military “experts” — of capturing Moscow in six weeks went up in smoke.

Nazi troops found total destruction and desolation in every captured city or town — the “scorched earth” policy. Soviet defenders burned everything to the ground that they could not take with them and then organized armed resistance behind enemy lines: the Partisans. Over 6,000 factories were dismantled and moved east of the Ural Mountains, re-assembled to produce weapons again, a feat requiring total unity

Continued on page 7

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